

are not working or are looking for work in the months during which they receive aid. Income eligibility thresholds in many States are so low that even meager earnings make a family ineligible for AFDC.

I do not subscribe to the theory that the vast majority of persons on welfare are able-bodied persons who do not want to work. Research has provided evidence that there is much movement between welfare and work, and that the average time spent on welfare is about 2 years.

When I was elected to Congress last March I told my constituents that I was committed to ending welfare as they knew it and to making AFDC the transitional program it was intended to be—a bridge over troubled waters. But I was not committed to the bill that was voted on today.

The legislation that was passed by this body and will be signed by the President will move over 1 million children and 2.6 million families further into poverty, without any safety net provisions or proof that there will be jobs available that allow them to earn a livable wage.

In the State of California there are more than 2.5 million families on welfare: 1.8 million children and 800 thousand adults. What will happen to those families when the promise of a job is not kept and there are no means by which parents can put food on the table?

This reform bill will have disastrous financial consequences for California and Los Angeles County. California alone will be subjected to 40 percent of the Federal funding loss over the next 6 years, totaling \$10 billion of an estimated \$25 billion in lost revenue.

In Los Angeles County, the estimated 93,000 legal immigrants who would lose SSI benefits would still be eligible for county-funded general relief. The annual increase, however, in county costs could total \$236 million if all 93,000 applied for general assistance, putting LA county's budget into a further deficit.

My State and my constituency will bear the full weight of the disproportionate fiscal impact that will ultimately undermine the fiscal health of Los Angeles County.

The current welfare system doesn't work and hadn't worked for a long time. However, in our attempts to aid the families who are on welfare gain economic self sufficiency, we should have been careful not to hurt our Nation's children and bankrupt the counties in which they live.

CORRIDOR H

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from West Virginia [Mr. WISE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, as Congress heads home today for the August recess, and I will be driving home via Route 55, and in much of the eastern Panhandle and eastern part of our State during August, Route 55 and the other roads are going to be curvy. But because of action taken today, the trip will be a little bit lighter.

The Federal Highway Administration today is releasing its Federal record of decision on corridor H. The record of

decision is a very significant milestone for this important highway because it is the final signoff for authorizing the West Virginia Division of Highways to proceed with the final design, including the right of way designation. Now the State can begin advertising for engineering for the final design process.

Mr. Speaker, this work is important, and it has been done and achieved because of work done by Governor Caperton and Senator BYRD particularly. Because of Senator BYRD, about 20 percent of the funding is already appropriated. Governor Caperton has provided the matching funds in the West Virginia legislature, so that roughly \$200 million is banked to begin this construction. Their efforts and the teamwork of the entire congressional delegation have kept this vital project moving forward.

Now corridor H enters what is known as the contract planned phase that physically locates the actual route, identifies the property owners, does the negotiations. Ground breaking could begin as early as year's end.

This record of decision reflects the analysis of engineering, economic and environmental issues. To those concerned about environmental issues, and I have been involved in this from the very beginning, particularly on a segment between Buckhannon and Elkins where we satisfactorily resolve those issues, and now many people happily drive that four-lane segment.

To those concerned about environmental issues, they should know there has been review, and it is reflected in the ROD issued today, the record of decision of acid mine drainage, excess excavation and flooding issues. We have suffered again flooding in significant parts of eastern West Virginia, as I speak, and you should know and people should know that once again these areas are flooding. Corridor H has not been built there.

To those who are concerned corridor H would make that situation worse, aggravate it, they should know that it does not change the flooding situation in those segments, and so construction of corridor H does not affect the flooding that we have seen. We flooded, incidentally, in many parts of the State that do not have corridor H yet. We flooded three times this year already.

This highway is over 100 miles long, running from Elkins to the Virginia line.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, you mentioned the Virginia line, that it runs to my district, and I had expressed concern. I keep hearing the West Virginia officials talking about dumping traffic in my area. We have decided in Virginia we do not want corridor H.

I would ask the gentleman to deal with the West Virginia highway officials to resolve this matter, because if this matter is not resolved, I may very well come out and do everything in my

power to kill corridor H from the Virginia line clear on into West Virginia.

Mr. WISE. Taking my time back, I appreciate the gentleman's remarks. The gentleman and I have talked before, and we are interested in building corridor H in West Virginia. If the gentleman chooses not to build it in Virginia, that is fine. We think that it is an important project for our State. What is done in Virginia is the decision of my colleague and the Virginia officials, and I would hope that we could continue to work together on that.

I would like to be able to complete my remarks.

Mr. WOLF. If the gentleman would just yield for a second, just so I can make it on the record. I am not involving myself in West Virginia, as you know, but I am concerned about the statements that the West Virginia Highway Department is now saying we are going to bring it up to the edge and dump it into Virginia; that will show the people in Virginia.

I would ask the gentleman to look into that.

Mr. WISE. Reclaiming my time again, I am happy to work with the gentleman. As I say, I think the gentleman and I can satisfactorily conclude what is done in West Virginia. We will build in West Virginia. We are not trying to affect Virginia, and Virginia's decision is Virginia's decision. We respect the gentleman for what he wants to do in Virginia, and we ask his respect for what we want to do in West Virginia.

Having said that, I think this project is importantly moving ahead in West Virginia. This is a significant day, and those in the eastern end of the State can know that this project has reached that very, very important point.

Yes, it very likely there could be an environmental lawsuit filed; we will see what happens as a result. But the important thing is that with this record of decision, many of these concerns have already been looked at, reviewed, satisfactorily met. We can now begin to move ahead. Hopefully we could see a ground breaking take place somewhere along this 100 mile segment between Elkins and the Virginia line sometime by the end of the year.

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For those who have waited many, many years, today is an important day. We have many more obstacles and many more challenges ahead of us, but the trip home is going to be a little bit better today because of this decision on corridor H.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 3950, THE G.I. BILL OF HEALTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maine [Mr. LONGLEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LONGLEY. Mr. Speaker, today is a very significant date. August 2, 1991, was the day Mr. Hussein and the Iraqi Army invaded the city of Kuwait. That was just 6 years ago. At the same time in 1965, August 2 was the date of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution.

I mention that because as a Persian Gulf veteran I certainly can appreciate the significance of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and as a veteran, I can appreciate the sacrifice that resulted from that resolution back in the 1960's. I also can respect the sacrifice that many other veterans have made, not just in Vietnam or Desert Storm, but also Korea, World War II, and many of the other various and sundry conflicts in which American troops have been engaged.

One message that is very clear to those who have served in the military is that you come to understand that there is a form of a compact between the veteran and your country: That you serve your country, and then in exchange, your country is going to take care of you and provide for your family in the event that you need that care, particularly as a result of your service. When you are on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, Uncle Sam provides health care for you and for your family. If you are no longer a member of the Armed Services since the 1930's, the Government has met its health care obligation to disabled and poor veterans through the Veterans Administration health care system.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the VA health care system is not functioning in quite the manner it should. There are questions today as to whether it is receiving adequate funding. There are other questions that relate to whether in fact it is adequately structured to meet the needs of today's veterans as we move into the 21st century. It is interesting to note that eligibility rules are so strict that most of our Nation's 26 million veterans do not have access to the VA system. In fact, a suggestion has been made that in many cases the rules are so strict and complicated that much more time, energy, and resources are devoted to the complex question of sorting out whether or not a veteran is qualified for care, perhaps more funds than would have been necessary to provide the care itself. That is a significant issue for today's veterans.

If you are a military retiree and the nearby base hospital closes, too bad. If you are just returning from Bosnia and you and your family need health care while you search for a job, again, you are not able to use the VA system. If you are a veteran who thinks the VA hospital should be open to you, guess again: Exclusions, restrictions, barriers, limitations; confusion, complexity. It has become absurd.

The system in many cases is failing to serve the veterans it was designed to care for and those who sacrificed for their country. Today I introduced a bold new idea, a new way of thinking about VA health care delivery. I think

it is the potential solution to the VA health care crisis. It is called the GI Bill of Health, H.R. 3950, and it presents a vision for change in how health care should be provided to veterans.

The measure seeks to authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs to receive third-party health insurance reimbursements, as well as to incorporate innovative managed care principles to provide for increased medical care options for veterans and their dependents. It attempts to build on what I think are significant increases in funding for the VA.

I might note for the record that in 1995 total funding for VA medical care was in the vicinity of \$16.1 billion. In the 1996 budget we provided an increase of over \$400 million for VA medical care, and just in the most recent budget we approved for the Veterans Administration, another \$500 million increase in the provisions for VA medical care, or well over \$1 billion, excuse me, almost \$1 billion in increased annual medical care funding. Yet, as I look at the veterans hospital in my district, the Togus Veterans Hospital, located in Togus, ME, just outside of Augusta, and when I sit in Washington I see two different perspectives. When I look at what we are doing for VA medical care here in Washington, and I see an increase of almost \$1 billion in annualized funding for VA medical care, it does not jive with the cuts and threats of cuts and cutbacks and loss of essential services that are being discussed and potential layoffs of key personnel that are being discussed back at the hospital in my own district.

Clearly, something is amiss. I have a feeling that the something that is amiss is that the system is not being as responsive to the needs of veterans on the receiving end of medical care as it needs to be. But I think, building on what we have attempted to do for funding for VA medical care, as well as two recent pieces of legislation, one that passed, both that passed within the last 2 weeks, first H.R. 3118, the Veterans Health Care Eligibility Reform Act and the Health Care Coverage Availability and Affordability Act which we passed just yesterday, each provides an opportunity to increase the access to veterans by creating a seamless medical care system that will serve all of our veterans in the context of what we are doing in our health care system.

TO BE PRO-CHOICE MEANS TO RECOGNIZE THE INDIVIDUAL AND INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. CAMPBELL] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. Speaker, I would like to read into the RECORD the words of Governor Pete Wilson of the State of California from the Los Angeles Times of yesterday:

"How do we reverse 50 years of growing out-of-wedlock births and deteriorating families?

"We must begin by recasting our culture. That will not happen by advocating an anti-abortion constitutional amendment that has no hope of being enacted because it is overwhelming opposed by the majority of Americans.

"What we must do is say to every teenage girl that it is morally wrong for her to get pregnant and to bring a child into the world unless she has a father for her child. Both parents must be prepared—emotionally and financially—to raise that child. Their child is their responsibility, not the taxpayers'. . . We must also focus on the men who are making them welfare mothers. If young men who impregnate women lack the basic decency to send love to their children, then they must at least send money. If they do not, in California we track them down and dock their pay. We lift their license to drive a car or to practice law.

"We also prosecute the older men who victimize young girls. More than half the babies born to teenage girls are fathered by adult men, not by boys.

"Government must never decide who can have children, but society does have a responsibility to discourage from having children those who cannot or will not accept the responsibility of parenthood. We are using mass media to teach abstinence to our children. For those who choose to have sex but reject the burden of parenthood, we must make contraception the available choice and the moral obligation to prevent unwanted pregnancies."

"The objections to even the modest tolerance language Bob Dole has proposed in the abortion plank of the GOP platform is further evidence that many of my fellow delegates to the Republican National Convention later this month will be absorbed by the debate on the rights of the unborn child. Though I am pro-choice, I share with them the desire to greatly reduce the number of abortions performed in America. It is a shocking 1.6 million per year.

"But with all respect to their concern for the unborn child, they and others on both sides of this issue are ignoring the even greater and more urgent challenge to America: How we deal with all the children born to parents who are either unwilling or unable to accept the responsibility of being parents.

"In 1945, the incidence of out-of-wedlock births was 1 in 25. Today, it is 1 in 3. In our inner cities it rises to more than 3 out of 4. Children born into fatherless homes are five times more likely to live in poverty, twice as likely to drop out of high school. Fatherless girls are three times more likely to end up as unwed teen mothers. Fatherless boys are overwhelmingly more likely to end up behind bars.